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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015

Strengthening the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa

Ninth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (A/68/506). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with the representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 19 November 2013.

2. By its resolution 57/300, the General Assembly endorsed the creation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and entrusted to it the role of coordinating reports and global advocacy in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In May 2003, the Secretary-General formally established the Office (see ST/SGB/2003/6) and since that time the Office has fulfilled its mandate, which has included supporting the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in their deliberations on Africa; coordinating and guiding the preparation of reports and inputs related to Africa; coordinating the Interdepartmental/Inter-agency Task Force on Africa to ensure a coherent and integrated approach for United Nations support for Africa, including following up on the implementation of all global summit and conference outcomes related to Africa; initiating reports on critical issues affecting Africa, in particular on peace and development; and coordinating global advocacy in support of NEPAD.

3. In section II of his report, the Secretary-General notes that Africa has been undergoing a significant transformation marked by major social, political and economic changes since the establishment of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa 10 years ago. He further notes that the transformation presents new opportunities and challenges that will require the Office to expand, strengthen its

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activities and broaden its engagement in order to better respond to the needs of the continent in the light of the changing global and African context.

II. Strengthening the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa

4. In paragraph 42 of his report, the Secretary-General noted that the General Assembly recognized the need for a strengthened approach to support Africa and adopted resolution 66/293 on the establishment of a United Nations monitoring mechanism to review commitments made towards Africa's development needs, with the mandate for the implementation of the monitoring mechanism vested in the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. To address the growing scope of mandated activities for the Office, the Secretary-General proposes in his report specific ways and means to strengthen the Office to enable it to implement its existing and expanded mandate more effectively, with a focus on the following areas of work: policy analysis, monitoring and research; intergovernmental support; advocacy; and inter-agency coordination.

5. The Advisory Committee recalls that paragraph 11 of resolution 66/293 requests the Secretary-General to "identify and reallocate resources, as appropriate, within the regular budget of the United Nations to enable the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to fulfil its mandate effectively regarding the monitoring mechanism". Upon enquiry as to what actions had been taken to implement paragraph 11, the Committee was informed that an arrangement to lend one P-3 post was in process between the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Office in 2013 to help meet the requirement to prepare the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations monitoring mechanism. The report was to be submitted to the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The Committee was further informed that since the approval of three new posts (one P-4 and two P-3) by the Assembly in its resolution 63/260, no additional measures had been taken to strengthen the staffing structure of the Office. **The Committee regrets that no action was taken to reallocate resources within the regular budget during the biennium 2012-2013 to enable the Office to fulfil the growing scope of its mandated activities.**

III. Resource requirements

6. In paragraph 65 of his report, the Secretary-General proposes a total of 10 new posts (2 P-5, 3 P-4, 3 P-3, 1 P-2 and 1 General Service (Principal level)) to reinforce the capacity of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to provide dedicated support to African countries in the intergovernmental negotiations for the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals, and to support the implementation of the United Nations monitoring mechanism and the strengthening of the Office's inter-agency coordination function and advocacy and communications activities. The total additional requirements proposed by the Secretary-General amount to $4,758,700 (net of staff assessment), broken down as follows: $4,036,100 under subprogramme 1, Coordination of global advocacy of and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development, of section 11, United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development; and $722,600 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services. Details of the requirements are reflected in paragraph 68 of the report of the Secretary-General.

Comments and recommendations on posts

7. The estimated cost of the 10 new posts proposed by the Secretary-General would amount to $4,127,100 in 2014-2015 and their functions are outlined in annex II to his report. They comprise: 6 posts in the Policy Analysis and Monitoring Unit: 1 Senior Programme Officer (P-5), 2 Programme Officers (P-4), 1 Economic Affairs Officer (P-3), 1 Programme Officer (P-3) and 1 Associate Economic Affairs Officer (P-2); 3 posts in the Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Unit: 1 Senior Programme Officer (P-5), 1 Communications Officer (P-4) and 1 Programme Officer (P-3); and 1 post in the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, a Senior Staff Assistant (General Service (Principal level)).

8. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa could not absorb the additional mandates within its existing resources because its entire existing professional staff was fully engaged in the implementation of existing mandates. In addition, the Committee was informed that the proposed resources were justified by the magnitude of the additional work to be undertaken, especially in relation to the United Nations monitoring mechanism, coupled with increasing demands to provide effective support to African countries in the intergovernmental deliberations on and subsequent implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. According to paragraph 42 of the report of the Secretary-General, this need was recognized by the General Assembly in paragraph 11 of its resolution 66/293 (see also paragraph 5 above).

9. Upon further enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the implementation of activities related to the United Nations monitoring mechanism required staff with specific competencies and skills. For example, the Committee was informed that the Senior Programme Officer (P-5) and the two Programme Officers (P-4) proposed for the Policy Analysis and Monitoring Unit would lead the implementation of the United Nations monitoring mechanism, building on existing monitoring mechanisms, which is a task that requires an in-depth knowledge of and familiarity with existing mechanisms as well as their strengths and limitations. Because the United Nations monitoring mechanism must be grounded in accurate and reliable data, the Committee was informed that the functions required an advanced degree in economics with a doctorate-level degree seen as desirable for the P-5 post; strong economic statistics and econometric backgrounds; and, preferably, a strong record of publications on economic development issues in the context of Africa. According to the representatives of the Secretary-General, the existing Senior Economic Affairs Officer (P-5) and Economic Affairs Officers (P-4) had limited experience in managing multiple datasets and were not familiar with work on monitoring frameworks, such as the Mutual Review of Development Effectiveness in Africa of ECA and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

10. The Advisory Committee was informed that the three posts requested for the Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Unit (one P-5, one P-4 and one P-3) would strengthen the inter-agency coordination and advocacy work undertaken by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in support of Africa, in particular through the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on African Affairs, which has proven useful for coordinating, synthesizing and analysing the United Nations system's inputs to the reports prepared by the Office, as well as the

preparation of high-level events. With the establishment of the United Nations monitoring mechanism, the Committee was informed that there was a greater need to utilize the Task Force, which until now has been convened on an ad hoc basis, in a more regular and frequent manner to mobilize inputs and data from the United Nations system organizations. According to the representatives of the Secretary-General, the proposed posts would provide more regular and consistent support to the Task Force.

11. Upon further enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the new post of Communications Officer (P-4) had been proposed to support the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in its advocacy work, including in its role as the convener of the advocacy and communications cluster within the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa. The Committee was further informed that a senior professional with experience in journalism, public information and development communication in the context of Africa was required in order to liaise effectively with other stakeholders, including with senior-level communications counterparts in the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, ECA, NEPAD and the African Union Commission, as well as with relevant media organizations. It was also indicated that such a professional would lead the critical communications and advocacy work required to develop and implement a new, continent-wide communications strategy through the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa. In addition, the Committee was informed that the existing staff of the Office did not include an officer of that level and experience.

12. Concerning the two existing General Service staff members in the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Advisory Committee was informed that the main functions of the General Service (Principal level) staff member were to serve as a focal point for the coordination, monitoring and implementation of activities of the two units (the Policy Analysis and Monitoring Unit and the Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Unit); provide administrative support to both units and to senior management; provide support for programme implementation; supervise support staff; and monitor budgetary commitments. The Committee was informed that the functions of the General Service (Other level) staff member were to provide secretarial, research and clerical support, especially for the Director, including document preparation; managing timetables, making travel arrangements and liaising with other departments, agencies and offices; and providing basic support in the preparation of the publications of the Office.

13. Concerning the proposed General Service (Principal level) post, the Advisory Committee was informed that its functions would be to take full responsibility for time management and scheduling on behalf of the Special Adviser on Africa with appropriate consultation as required; serve as the first point of contact for the Special Adviser and liaise with senior officials internally and externally; provide substantive support in managing the priorities and workflow of the Special Adviser and of the work units; coordinate and monitor multiple and diverse activities and work processes to ensure that management directives and decisions are properly carried out and products are delivered in a timely manner; serve as a communications link between the Special Adviser and senior staff; manage the correspondence of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; support the Special Adviser in his presentations to intergovernmental bodies and other meetings; supervise the work of support staff; and organize official receptions and meetings.

The Committee is of the view that the functions of the proposed post can be performed within the existing staffing capacity of the Office.

14. **The Advisory Committee has no objection to the new posts proposed by the Secretary-General, with the exception of the post of Senior Staff Assistant (General Service (Principal level))** (see paragraph 13 above).

Vacant posts

15. During its consideration of the proposals of the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa was operating at nearly 80 per cent capacity and that five posts (two D-1, two P-4 and one P-3) were vacant as at 1 November 2013. The Committee was also informed that recruitment actions were under way for the vacant posts. **The Committee expects that all the vacant posts will be filled expeditiously.**

Comments and recommendations on non-post resources

Experts

16. In addition to the post resources, the Secretary-General proposes resource requirements amounting to $338,000 for the biennium 2014-2015 to implement activities relating to the United Nations monitoring mechanism mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/293. He indicates that five consultative meetings will be organized with a wide spectrum of stakeholders with the purpose of mobilizing inputs from various stakeholders to the United Nations monitoring mechanism; collecting quantitative and qualitative data for the report of the Secretary-General on the review of implementation of commitments made towards Africa's development; and reviewing the existing monitoring mechanisms in order to assess their strengths and weaknesses.

17. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the preliminary list of stakeholders to the United Nations monitoring mechanism included African organizations such as the African Union Commission, NEPAD, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Monitor and other international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission, OECD, the Centre for Global Development, the Africa Progress Panel, the South Centre and other organizations and individuals with expertise on monitoring commitments by African countries and donor countries, as well as from Africa's new and emerging development partners.

18. Upon further enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the venue of the consultation meetings was determined in accordance with the needs of the stakeholders to be consulted and, as laid out in annex III to the report of the Secretary-General, the budgeting for the meetings was based on the travel costs (airfare, daily subsistence allowance and terminal payments) of the participating experts. In that regard, the Committee was informed that the consultation meeting for the Africa region would be held at ECA in Addis Ababa, while the meeting in Paris was for European stakeholders only and would be held at the headquarters of OECD in Paris, with conference facilities, including interpretation, provided by the host at no cost. It was explained that by convening the meetings in the stakeholders' respective regions, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa would save on the travel costs of participants; for example, holding the European stakeholders

consultation meeting within Europe would be less costly than holding it at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa. The Committee requested, but was not provided with, information on the comparative cost of holding all the consultation meetings at ECA headquarters. **The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to provide this information on the cost of holding the consultation meetings at ECA headquarters to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of his proposals.**

19. The Advisory Committee was further informed that some of the participants would be invited in their individual capacities as experts, providing important input into the report of the United Nations monitoring mechanism. As to why the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa would fund their participation, the Committee was informed that, given the nature of the commitments being reviewed, many of the experts would be coming from developing countries and as such might not have resources to fund their own participation. Therefore, defraying their travel and accommodation costs would be important to securing their participation.

20. **The Advisory Committee expects that every effort will be made to contain the costs of the stakeholder consultation meetings. In addition, the Committee requests that detailed information on the cost and composition of participants for all meetings be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the proposals of the Secretary-General.**

Travel of staff

21. The Secretary-General proposes further resource requirements amounting to $293,600 for the biennium 2014-2015 for travel of staff to reinforce the capacity of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in advocacy and communications outreach through the participation of the Special Adviser on Africa and staff members in critical regional and global meetings to engage with African countries, as well as key interlocutors involved in African development, to raise awareness of Africa and to mobilize support for Africa's development. It is indicated that those meetings would include the Ministerial Conferences of the World Trade Organization (WTO), annual meetings of AfDB, annual meetings of the World Bank Group/International Monetary Fund and the meetings of the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The requirements for travel of staff are summarized in annex IV to the report of the Secretary-General.

22. The Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that, depending on the rank and level of the meeting, either the Under-Secretary-General or the Director would participate, accompanied by at least one Professional staff member to provide substantive support, including preparing concept notes, following discussions and preparing post-meeting reports. If the meeting was of a technical nature, the Committee was informed, a substantive officer at the P-5 or P-4 level would represent the Office. The Committee was further informed that for three meetings, namely, the annual meeting of AfDB, the Ministerial Conference of WTO and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the Under-Secretary-General would be accompanied by two staff members, the additional staff member being needed to facilitate the coverage of important side events that are normally organized at such meetings.

23. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly decided on alterations to standards of accommodation with respect to the travel of staff. During its consideration of the budget proposals of the Secretary-General for the biennium 2014-2015, the Committee noted that the anticipated savings from that decision had not been reflected in the budgetary assumptions for the period and therefore recommended an overall reduction of 5 per cent of total travel costs for staff across all budget sections (A/68/7, chap. I, para. 123).

24. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the proposals of the Secretary-General for non-post resources subject to a reduction of 5 per cent in the requirements for travel of staff, in line with its recommendation for all budget sections.**

General comments and observations

Performance measures

25. During its consideration of the proposals of the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that because the expected accomplishments and the indicators of achievements were broad and in line with the mandate of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa on the mobilization of international support for Africa's development, advocacy and inter-agency coordination, no new indicators of achievement would be required for the additional resources requested. The Committee was informed, however, that new performance measures would be added to reflect the additional tasks that would be undertaken with regard to the United Nations monitoring mechanism. **The Committee is of the view that new performance measures should have been included in the proposals of the Secretary-General to reflect the additional tasks to be performed.**

IV. Recommendation

26. **Taking into account its recommendations contained in paragraphs 14, 18 and 24 above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the proposals contained in paragraph 69 of the report of the Secretary-General.**